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NEWS

Winchester Town Meeting members walk proposed North Main Street district

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

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Planning Board Chair Keri Layton speaks to members of the Town Meeting Members Association during a morning walk through the proposed Main Street Mixed-use District on Oct. 20. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

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On a bright, sunny Sunday morning, more than a dozen Town M members walked the half mile between Skillings Road and the Woburn

line for a tour of the new proposed Main Street Mixed-use District (MSMD).

The walking tour was put together by the Town Meeting Member Association (TMMA).

Town Meeting members listen to Jack LeMenager, chair of the Winchester Historical Commission, talk about the historic Verizon building on Main Street. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

The MSMD aims to meet goals set out in the Winchester 2030 Master Plan — adopted in 2019 — and calls for a change in zoning to allow mixed-use residential, higher building heights and a variety of businesses on current parcels for the Main Street area.

Jack LeMenager, communications director for the TMMA and chair of the Winchester Historical Commission, said the tour was the first of its kind for the organization. He said Michael Creane had the idea and reached out to Planning Board Chair Keri Layton, who agreed to conduct the walk.

An invite was sent out to all 192 Town Meeting members, but onl
were on hand Oct. 20.

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“It’s a pretty good turnout,” LeMenager said, adding the tour was aimed at helping Town Meeting members visualize what the MSMD might look like. “It’s one thing to Google streetscapes and to drive by the area. But, it’s another thing to walk by and really look at the buildings, to see the details.”

That’s what Precinct 1 Town Meeting member Ann Sera was hoping for on Sunday morning.

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Planning Board Chair Keri Layton talks about an area on Swanton Street to Town Meeting members. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

"It's a great idea," she said, of the walking tour. "So many times, Town Meeting members have to look at charts and legal words and we

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out to see and inspect the actual buildings and what they're trying to do with the area."

Former Select Board member Doug Marmon agreed.

"Zoning can be such a chore," Marmon said, with a laugh. "People can go on and on and on and I thought it might be clearer to actually see it."

Precinct 8 Town Meeting member Rebecca Slisz, who lives in the proposed MSMD area, said she's very interested in plans for this area of town since it hasn't been as well developed as the downtown.

"I see a lot of potential," she said. "A lot of people drive through Winchester and from the Woburn line, it gets a little spotty until you get to downtown."

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As executive director of the Network for Social Justice, Slisz said she's also interested in the affordable housing aspect as well as the mixed-use businesses. She credited the TMMA for the opportunity to walk the area and listen to what people had to say.

"It gives me a better idea of what the goals are and what it might look like," Slisz said.

Support for the MSMD

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members seemed impressed by the scope of what the town has planned for the proposed district.

Select Board member Bill McGonigle, also a Precinct 3 Town Meeting member, praised the Planning Board for the hours of work put into the MSMD. He also praised the TMMA for putting together the walking tour.

“It’s fantastic,” he said, adding the tour provided a “great educational opportunity” for those who showed up. “There are a number of people here who are always engaged members of Town Meeting, but there are a handful I’ve never seen before. It’s a good sign.”

Town Meeting members walk the area from the Woburn line to Skillings Road on Oct. 20 to check out the proposed MSMD. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

McGonigle said there aren’t a lot of buildable areas left in Winchester and he was optimistic about the MSMD, having seen the amount of ti

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Planning Board has spent on the measure and by the interest of Town Meeting members at Sunday's event.

LeMenager said the Historical Commission has already endorsed the MSMD article, which he will also do on the floor of Town Meeting in November.

"Our primary concern is preservation," he said. "The Planning Board and the town planner have been very cooperative and have listened to us and that's important. We have been working with them to identify what we consider to be potentially historic properties."

He estimated there are at least 24 such properties along the half mile stretch.

"My personal opinion is that development will happen," LeMenager said of the MSMD area. "But we should have a plan in place and have some control over it."

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Planning Board Chair Keri Layton explains an aspect of the MSMD area to Town Meeting members. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

Planning Board Chair Kerri Layton, who led the Oct. 20 tour, said she was pleased with the turnout.

“I think it went well and there were a lot of good questions,” she said. “That will help me understand what people are concerned about and help with my presentation for Town Meeting.”

When asked whether she thought the MSMD article would pass, Layton laughed.

“I’m always hopeful,” she said. “But you never know. Town Meeting is its own beast. We have a very bright, very well-educated town and they are eager to participate. I think they are mostly in support of this.”

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The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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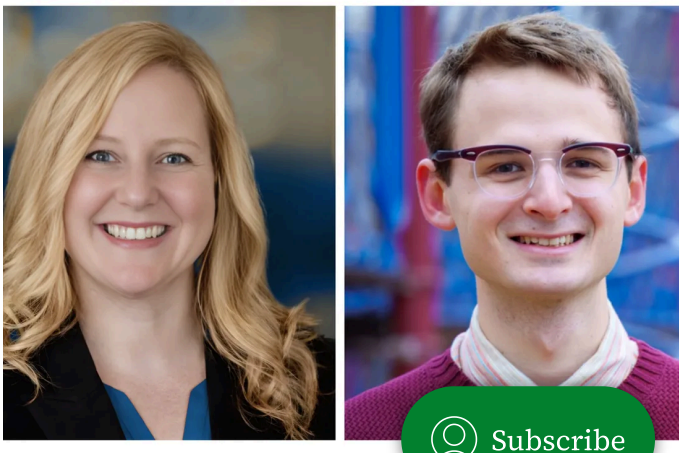

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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